

LIVELIHOOD IN SILWA

dered; but everyone must give them something, even 'ten or eleven cobs of millet'. The same procedure of payment applies to the village undertaker and the man who calls the prayer-times (muazzin) and the postman. In the case of the man who leads the prayers (imam), villagers send his 'custom' to his home, besides the small amount of money he receives from the 'Ministry of Religious Endowments'. In other words, the artisans as a group are maintained by the community they serve, and are not paid by a fixed price for their results. There is an observable change in this 'maintenance basis' especially in the case of the carpenter on his making of furniture and doors. 465 [793]

The members of the third family of strangers are Christians (Coptic Church) who mainly derive their livelihood from the income of their corn mill and who live on the other side of the railway track. They had monopolized milling for twenty years. Then four persons from the village in competition started another corn-mill. Both these undertakings later co-operated and raised the charges, and it was this that gave an impetus to the whole village last year to establish a communal corn-mill. 463 [256] [797]

The fourth family which has a specialized job is that of the water-carriers who are also alien to the village. They live on the western border nearer to the Nile from which they draw water to distribute in water-skins to the homes of government officials, shopkeepers, childless couples and others, when extra water is required. They are paid either in bread, corn, or money, according to what they bring, and not on a 'maintenance basis' as their comparatively late arrival in the village has been welcomed by government officials, policemen, or childless people. [312] [465]

Sixty years ago the first shop was opened in the village by a family called al Hudoor from Esna, in the Province of Kena. Ten years later the first man from the village itself opened the second shop. At present, there are about thirty shops of varying size which have mostly started up during the last ten years. Payment for goods sold has been, more often than not, at the end of the harvest period. The shopkeepers keep an account of what customers buy, to be presented to them at this time. The same applies at present to most of the village government officials or wage-earners, who pay their bills for purchased goods at the end of the month. 443 [609] [452]

The market-day, held every Saturday (i.e. at the beginning of the week), is the main day for buying and selling. On this day economic as well as social exchange takes place, and it is said, 'Even to get the market's dust is better than not going to it'. Until three years ago the majority of the traders came from Edfu, the nearest town to Silwa. Retail traders, shoemakers, butchers, silversmiths, and coffee-makers come in to sell the villagers their goods, while commercial dealers buy crops, sheep, chickens and eggs. Since then, the number of traders from Edfu has diminished considerably, as a result of the increase in the number of village traders. [439]

¹ Plural of 'al Hadari' meaning coming from the town, which was the name given to them by the villagers at that time and which they still retain.

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876 is to this day judged by the amount of the Koran and the number of prophetic traditions which he can quote, and the number of proverbs and maxims he can bring into the argument. It is not surprising then that out of some twenty learned religious men in the village, five of them are well known for their perfect memorization of the Koran, two for the memorization of many poetic verses of the Sheikhs of the Nakhshabandia sect, the becoming the leaders of the order in the village, while two others are acknowledged as the most able reciters of verses and charms to ward off the 'evil eye'. From the linguistic point of view, for the speaker to claim that he knows a great deal about a particular thing, event, or person, is for him to assert that he 'memorizes it, or him, to the best of his memory'.¹

799 788 876 The writer is inclined to assume that the Islamic culture, or at least as it is practised in the Silwa community, emphasizes and fosters rote learning, memory, and enumerative procedures. There is abundant evidence of this in the repetitive elements in greetings, in conversation, in the verses and choruses in folk singing, in the ritual of the mystical orders (zikr), in the need to know the ninety-nine attributes of God, and the thirty-three names of the Prophet, and in the traditional way of memorizing the Koran in the Kuttab. In this connection, MacDonald says, 'Moslem practice was to repeat aloud until the thing was learnt—that is, by heart. They had observed, too, that no special thought was called for, only continued repetition.'²

876 153 In stating that the village culture mainly stimulates memory as the most important cognitive process one does not necessarily imply that people in the village have good memories. This emphasis on memory could be related to what Bateson calls the *eidos* of a culture, meaning by it that a culture might have a bias for the standardization of the cognitive aspects of the personality of its participants expressed in their cultural behaviour.³ One is tempted here to ask a similar question to that posed by Bateson himself as to what extent this bias for amassing knowledge is limited only to a small number of specialists. In attempting an answer, it must be remembered that the stimulation of a small number of specialists can react on the culture as a whole; they have set themselves up as the leaders of the village life both in religious and social matters. From this it is fairly justified to conclude, as Bateson did, that 'the individuals most affected by the stimulation of memory actually contribute very much more than their fellows to the elaboration and maintenance of the culture'.⁴

¹ The equivalent phrase to this in the colloquial language of the village is 'hafdanhuh hifid', in classical Arabic 'ahfathuh hifitha'.

² MacDonald, *Aspects of Islam*, New York, 1911. The resort to rote learning has been the bane of education in modern schools. Criticisms of students' 'parrot-like' work are abundant in many of the official Government Reports. See E. Chaparède, *Rapport Général Présenté au Ministère de l'Instruction Publique*, Cairo, 1929; F. O. Mann, *A Report on Certain Aspects of Egyptian Education*, Cairo, 1929; Ministry of Education, *Report on Secondary Education*, Cairo, 1935.

³ Gregory Bateson, *Naama*, p. 220.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-7.

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tutors or in the Kuttab, the most important content in learning is the memorizing of the Koran as the basis of all other knowledge. The Kuttab has been, and is still in many remote villages in Aswan, the institution for religious learning, in which children learn part or the whole of the Koran, to be able to use this knowledge for their recitation and prayers, and the observation of correct ritual and prayer. The learning of reading and writing was always secondary to this all-important aim.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a great number of Kuttabs were financed by the revenue derived from charitable foundations called 'Wakfs'.¹ It was not until 1906 that these schools felt the impact of the central Government authority. In that year the Kuttab was organized, and a system of inspection and awards was worked out in accordance with which Kuttabs satisfying the official requirements could avail themselves of it. The aid was dependent upon daily instruction in the three R's, together with religious teaching, combined with a report of the Ministry of Education Inspector as to the general conditions of the Kuttab.² Later on, private awards were given to those boys who could satisfy the Inspector in an oral examination that they had learnt all the Koran by heart.

In Silwa and its neighbouring villages, there is only one aided 'Maktab', which is the official name for a recognized Kuttab, besides the other five unrecognized Kuttabs.³ It is significant to note that four out of the six Kuttabs are attached to, or situated very near, a mosque, and the fifth is adjacent, and connected with a clan's guest house. Apart from the obvious connection between the mosque and religious learning in the Kuttab, such a proximity between the Kuttab, the mosque and the clan guest house enables the Kuttab boys to fetch water from the wells of the mosque or the clan guest house to be used for drinking, or for cleaning their wooden tablets. Out of the six Sheikhs running the Kuttabs in Silwa, three are blind. The Kuttab building usually consists of two rooms, with a raised dais in each room for the Sheikh. There is hardly any equipment, except the Sheikh's prayer mat, and the wooden tablets on which the boys write their Koranic assignment. The aided Kuttab is, however, an exception, as it has wooden seats, desks, and a blackboard, and is whitewashed. All the Kuttabs, except the aided one, are confined to boys. Only recently have some girls begun to attend the aided Kuttab, as attendance at it exempts both boys and girls from going to the compulsory school. In fact, throughout the history of Moslem Egypt the keenness on teaching girls the Koran has never been so strong as in the case of boys. MacDonald mentioned, however, that there are records of

¹ J. Hayworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*.

² Ministry of Education, *Code of Regulations Relating to Grants-in-Aid to Kuttabs*, No. 1161, May 1906.

³ The Kuttab is usually referred to in Silwa by the name Khalwa—a word which literally means 'an isolated place for worship'.

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This is the normal routine of the Kuttab, one which has now been challenged by the compulsory school which does not allow any boy between seven and twelve years old to attend the Kuttab for a full day, and at present only those who are less than seven or over twelve can afford to remain in the Kuttab for the full day. In spite of this some of the compulsory school boys attend the Kuttab early in the morning where they write their Koranic assignment before going to the school; some of them bring their loaves of bread at lunch-time for the Sheikh, and spend about an hour after the end of the school day in the Kuttab learning the Koran. 877

The Kuttab is not merely an educational institution for the boys. Adults also visit it to consult the Sheikh about certain religious matters, to have a letter written, or a charm supplied against the evil eye, or just to listen to the Koran being recited, or even for an ordinary chat. They have free access to the Kuttab, sitting outside or in the outer room, or they may enter it to ask the Sheikh's permission to take away their boy temporarily for some pressing errand or task. One occasionally sees adults bringing food or tea to Kuttab children as a 'karama', or to invoke the boys' purity in asking God to fulfil one of his wishes. The Kuttab boys are supposed to combine the innocence of children with the 'baraka' of the Koran, and hence their prayers are usually answered by God. Parents go to the Kuttab to complain to the Sheikh about the misdemeanours of their sons, whereupon the Sheikh would give the boys concerned a lesson on the importance of obedience to parents, or threaten them, or even thrash them in front of their parents. The method of discipline in the Kuttab is that of *jus flagelli*. In cases of serious offences such as offending one's father or swearing at religion, or mentioning the mother in swearing, two strong boys would hold the offender's feet in a turban (usually the offender's turban if he wears one), and lift them in front of the Sheikh, who would administer the striking as he deems fit. The corporal punishment administered to the children by the Kuttab Sheikh is almost universally accepted by the villagers without complaint. During my stay, there was only one occasion on which one of the villagers lodged a complaint against the Sheikh to the police, accusing the former of unduly thrashing his son, and this, according to the Sheikh himself, was the first event of its kind in his lifetime. Since then none of the Sheikhs has accepted that boy in his Kuttab. 794

The Sheikhs are indeed highly respected in the village, for they not only teach the boys the Koran, but derive their status from the fact that they are the perpetuators of the Holy Book giving enlightenment to the people on religious matters. In Silwa and its neighbouring villages, the leaders of the mosque prayers (Imams) are always Kuttab Sheikhs, and people seek their advice if they are in doubt whether a particular action or deed is in conformity with religious injunctions. Some of them also recite the Koran during the nightly celebration in Ramadan and at 793

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954

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793 'mulids', weddings and funerals. They are never addressed without the prefix of 'Sheikh'.

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[896] In evaluating the educational aims of the Kuttab, one must remember the purpose of such an institution in a community like Silwa, and its aims in Egyptian society in general during the eighteenth century for instance. The present Kuttab in Silwa fulfills the task demanded of it by the people in maintaining the standards of Islamic learning in which the memorizing of the Koran comes first and foremost. Indeed, the religious and moral ideals of Islam have determined the scope of Islamic education. For the Greeks, education was part of politics, for the Moslems it is part of a comprehensive system of theology. For the latter the object of education is the salvation of the soul and not the control of nature and society.¹

To expect the Kuttabs to prepare children for practical life or to teach them arithmetic, drawing, or rhythmic movements, according to some of the modern critics of these institutions, is to assume modern standards and social demands in a society which by its very organization does not require its schools to provide such activities. This is the task of the parents, and is to be learnt through life itself. It must be emphasized here that children are sent to the Kuttab voluntarily and they themselves are not averse to attending it to learn part of the Koran. Indeed, the alternative is for the children to work hard in the fields. The Kuttab Sheikhs are fully aware of the drawbacks of the educational system in the village at present. They see that the learning of the Koran by the children is interrupted by compulsory schooling, that parents do not leave their children undisturbed in the Kuttabs but frequently withdraw them to help at home or in the fields. They also complain that fewer boys remain in the Kuttab to go through the Koran again, after they finish the first time, and thus they forget it quickly. Nevertheless, in spite of what one may say of the Kuttab, it is evident from the opinions of the villagers that one cannot ignore the strength of the religious motive that renders this educational institution an integral part of the community. Practically every family in the village with more than two sons would like, as an ideal, to dedicate one of them 'to the cause of knowledge' (Ilm). Moreover, one notices that it is usually the younger brothers who attend the Kuttab, as the older brothers are more often needed for father's aid in farm work. Yet it is not unusual to hear of a man taking a vow to send his first son to the Kuttab, for this means an economic sacrifice for the sake of 'baraka', emanating from learning the Koran. Sending the youngest boy to the Kuttab is considered as a way of showing parental affection for the last born, by sparing him the arduous tasks of working in the fields. Blind boys find in the Kuttab a place where they can absorb themselves in learning the Koran, and it is mostly these blind boys who remain in the Kuttab until they finish memorizing the whole of it.

[732] ¹ See for example the writings of Al-Ghazali, *hya-ulum-iddin* (Boulaq, 1879); Az-Zarnuji, *To'lim al-Mu'allim Wa Tarikat al-Id' allum* (translated by C. E. von Grunebaum and Theodora M. Abel, New York, 1947).

CHAPTER VII

DEATH AND FUNERARY CEREMONIES

WHEN a male or female Muslim is dying it is the custom to give him or her some water to drink. So far, despite careful inquiries, I have discovered no definite belief associated with the practice; all that I have been told is that it is a custom that must always be observed. It may originally, perhaps, have been a purificatory or vivificatory rite. In certain parts of Egypt it is the custom for some of the people sitting or standing near a person who is *in extremis* to squeeze his or her body with their hands, in order to force the soul out of it. Men do this for a man and women for a woman. When death has actually taken place the eyes and mouth of the deceased are closed, and the legs drawn down straight and laid close together. The body is then washed, the water for this purpose being obtained, if possible, from a mosque or from some sacred well or pool connected with a sheikh. In Upper Egypt the corpse may be washed by a *fikh*, who takes as payment all the clothes of the deceased, and also the remains of the soap used in the washing. [763] [774] [764] [778] [767] [793]

As Egypt is a very hot country burial takes place very shortly after death. For instance, if a death has occurred in the morning or early afternoon the funeral takes place the same day. On the other hand, if death resulted from some injury due to accident or an act of violence burial is not permitted till the Government doctor and police officials have made full investigations. [756] [752]

If some one is dying in the village the news soon spreads, and friends and relations flock in crowds to the house. The moment the breath is out of the body female relatives and a number of professional mourners begin to shriek and scream (Fig. 50). Many of them leave the house of death and perambulate the village seven times, uttering the while piercing cries, and waving handkerchiefs, usually black, blue, or green in colour, as they go along. This perambulation of wailing women is not, anyhow at the present day, consciously associated with any idea of driving the spirit or [763] [764]

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The clothes which the man or woman wore when he or she died must be washed, and then a *fikh* comes and recites passages from the *Qurān*, having the clothes close to him and one of his hands resting on them. He also recites over the place where the person died. If these precautions are not taken the *rōh* of the dead person cannot leave the house. When a child dies a hen is killed instead of an animal, the rest of the procedure being the same as on the occasion of the death of an older person.

I have given this information as it was repeated to me, but I



FIG. 51. STRING OF WAILING WOMEN IN A FUNERAL PROCESSION

fancy that it is really the *'afrīt* of the dead person that is meant in this statement, not the *rōh*, which is the soul, the *'afrīt* being the ghost, and quite separate from the *rōh*, according to the popular belief.¹

The corpse is borne to the grave by four male bearers, who are constantly changed during the procession to the cemetery, for to assist in thus carrying the dead is considered a pious act, and he who performs it thereby acquires considerable merit. The funeral procession is headed by men, those who are relations walking as near as possible to the bier. Immediately behind the bier walk the female mourners (Fig. 51), their faces, hands, and arms dyed blue, and their heads, breasts, and arms plastered with mud; they hold handkerchiefs, usually blue or black, and sometimes green, which they wave in the air as they give vent to their piercing

¹ See below, pp. 237 ff.

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[163] ululations of grief. Among them are professional wailers, whose lamentations are the loudest of all.

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779 It should be noted here that the wailing and general uproar made by women at a death is quite contrary to the teaching of the founder of Islām, and many men among the peasants in Egypt have often expressed to me their disapproval of the practice. As will be seen later, this custom is one of the many survivals from ancient times

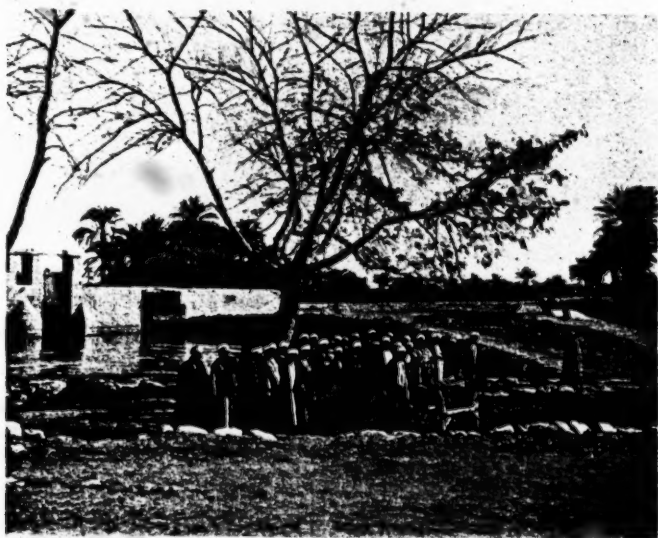


FIG. 52. THE HALT FOR PRAYER ON THE WAY TO THE CEMETERY

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151 It is surprising for how long a time the women can keep up their wailing, which is pitched in a very high key. As a matter of fact, their throats are often so affected by the continuous uttering of these piercing cries that at the end of one day of mourning they can speak only in a whisper.

On its way to the grave the funeral procession halts at a specially chosen spot, and the bier is placed on the ground (Fig. 52). The men stand in rows, one behind the other, and assume a deeply reverential attitude, while a *ḥikīm* (plur. *ḥikāhā*; see p. 172) recites passages from the *Qurān*, the assembled men often joining in. When these recitations are finished the bearers come forward and raise

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764 selves outside the doorway, where they are joined by friends, all observing almost complete silence, except on arrival, when they may say, "*El-bakīyeh fi hayātak*"—literally, "May what remains over be in your life!"—*i.e.*, "May the rest of the days of the dead be added to your life!"

764 The female mourners, including the professional wailers, congregate together, either inside the house or in some secluded spot 535 outside. Here they continue to utter their piercing cries, and usually also engage in a dance. The dancers, each one swaying slightly backward and forward, move in a circle, smiting their cheeks the while with both hands in rhythmic accompaniment to their chanting and cries. I have seen women thus beating their cheeks till blood flowed. One of the dancers often beats a *nadam*, a single-membrane drum, resembling a tambourine, but without 539 jingles.

The mourning ceremonies are continued for seven days, though 765 very occasionally they may last for three days only. The first 788 evening after the burial *fukahā* come to the house, one of them 782 bringing a large rosary, called a *sibḥeh*, consisting of five hundred 793 to a thousand large beads. They repeat passages from the *Qurān* a thousand times, keeping count of the recitations by means of the beads. The merit of this religious exercise is conveyed to the deceased. During the period of mourning *fukahā* come daily to the house to recite the *Qurān*, but the ceremony with the rosary is performed on the first night only.

The *fukahā* are usually given a small sum of money for their 765 services, and also at intervals in their recitations they are refreshed 793 with coffee and cigarettes, but no one, either performer or listener, 865 would ever think of smoking while they are in progress. I have been present several times on such occasions, and have been much impressed by the excellence of many of the voices, as well as by the reverent attitude of all the people present. The *fukahā* sit cross-legged on a bench inside the house, and, as they recite, sway from side to side, holding one hand against one side of the face. One of them usually acts as leader, and the others join in as a chorus; 516 or sometimes the chief *ṣikīh* will tell one of his subordinates to 788 take his place and recite. The recitations last for an hour or more.

On the seventh day after a death the mourning at the house 765 ceases, and the women, accompanied by their male relatives, visit 431 the grave. They bring loaves of bread, called *kaḥk*, which are

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either round and somewhat flat or ring-shaped. A number of very poor people and *fuḳahā* follow the mourners to the cemetery. The bread is given away to the poor in the name of the dead, and the *fuḳahā* also receive their share in return for recitations from the *Ḳorān* at the graveside. These men may receive small sums of money for their services in addition to the gifts of bread. The visit is repeated on the fifteenth and fortieth days after the death (see also pp. 117 ff.)

It is customary to engage two or three *fuḳahā* to give recitations regularly two or three times a year in a house where a death has taken place, to ensure the welfare of the deceased. Some people arrange for even more frequent recitations.

I will now briefly describe the various kinds of graves I have seen. The structure varies according to the nature of the ground in which the cemetery is situated. In some parts of Egypt the dead are buried along the lower desert. In this case the grave is not usually prepared beforehand, but a number of men, carrying the necessary implements for digging, accompany the funeral procession. When they arrive at the selected spot the bier on which the body lies is placed on the ground, and a shawl is fixed on sticks stuck into the ground to act as a temporary wind-screen. The diggers then set to work, and, after removing the covering of sand, dig a rectangular pit in the underlying limestone rock, oriented east and west. On the south side of the pit¹ a recess is cut, large enough to admit the corpse, which is lifted into its last resting-place by some of the men present, and with its head toward the west—i.e., looking east toward Mecca. The recess is then bricked over in such a way that a chamber is formed of sufficient size to admit of the deceased, sitting up in it. This is necessary on account of the belief that when the two examining angels visit the grave on the first night after burial the dead must be able to sit up while they question him. For this reason also the cords or tapes which are bound round the wrappings of the dead must be unfastened as soon as the body is laid in the grave. When the recess has been bricked over the pit is filled up and the sand piled in a mound over it, palm-branches being stuck into the sand to surmount the whole.

Sometimes instead of the mound of sand a brick superstructure such as is described below is erected above the grave. The above-

¹ So in the case of two interments that I have witnessed.

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pit. Shortly after this she appeared first to her brother, then to 775
her mother, and then again to her brother, to whom she related the
circumstances of her death and the exact spot where they would
find the filled-in well at the bottom of which her body lay. The
brother reported this to the proper officials, who went to the spot,
had the well excavated, and found the woman's body at the bottom,
just as she had told her mother and brother. The husband and the 682
friend who had assisted him in the murder were convicted on this
evidence, and sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment.

One day a week—in some parts of Egypt on Thursday, in others 769
on Friday—the villagers pay a visit to the graves of their relations 764
and friends. The ceremony is called *et-Tala'*, meaning the coming
forth or the going up. Many of the cemeteries are situated in
the lower desert, and this name may have been given because the
people always speak of 'going up' to and 'descending' from the 823
desert. On the day of *et-Tala'* the souls of the dead are believed
to return to their graves, and they expect their relatives to meet
them there. I have often taken part in these ceremonies, and the
following description of one of my visits shows what the proceedings
are on such occasions.

The cemetery where the events described took place is situated in
the lower desert, and it runs parallel to an ancient burial site lying
rather nearer the upper-desert slope. It is a sand- and wind-swept
place, and the palm-branches stuck into the mounds above the
graves quickly wither and assume the pale tawny colour of the
surrounding desert. But from the high-desert slope above, where
I was camping with my brother, the shadows cast by these branches
are so dark that they give the impression of black-clad figures
kneeling in perpetual grief, keeping silent watch by each grave. 769
From the camp I could see the people on their way to visit the
graves, and also much that was going on in the cemetery itself.
Early in the morning processions of women, often accompanied by
their male relatives, were to be seen wending their way from the
neighbouring villages toward this desert graveyard. Some were 442
walking, some, mostly men, were riding on donkeys. As soon as
the sound of the still distant wailing reached our camp I would
mount my donkey and start off to meet the mourners in the ceme-
tery. A number of *fukahā* were always present on these occasions,
as it was their business to recite various passages from the Korān by 793 ●
the gravesides, for which purpose they are hired by the visitors.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927

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I mounted my donkey and accompanied them. The women went only a short way with us, and we left them, the hysterical sister in their midst, huddled together on the high road which led through the cultivation, still shrieking, smiting their faces, and waving their arms aloft. As we passed on toward the peaceful desert their cries grew fainter and fainter in the distance, till at last no sound broke the stillness save the occasional singing of a hymn by the men who formed the funeral *cortège*.

When we arrived at the gate of the monastery every one passed within the precincts, and the bearers carried the coffin into the church, setting it down in front of the curtain behind which was the altar. We all entered the sacred building, and a seat was offered to me close to the corpse. There was a large assembly of both Copts and Muslims, for the dead man was much respected by the followers of both religions among whom he had lived. We waited and waited, but still there was no sign of a priest. The men beguiled the time by talking and smoking, and, though I am sure it was not at all intentional, there was an extraordinary lack of reverent demeanour in those present. At last the priest arrived. The whole congregation immediately rose to their feet, and after the priest had shaken hands with me the others came forward in turns and kissed his hand. The lid of the coffin was now removed, and the body disclosed, wrapped in its white and green coverings. A very dirty cloth, on which was sewn a cross in green, was placed over the body, and candles were lighted and stuck to the sides of the coffin—six on each side and one each at the head and feet. This was accomplished by dropping some of the melting wax from the lighted candles on to the coffin and sticking the candles on to it. Two larger candles were fitted into large candlesticks placed on either side of the head of the coffin. These candlesticks were possibly of silver, but were in such a dirty state that it was impossible to guess with any certainty of what they were made.

The service then began. It was very long, lasting for three hours or more! The priest was accompanied by the 'arif, as the man who leads the singing in a Coptic church is called. The latter was quite blind, and had a very resonant voice. When he sang he accompanied himself on a pair of cymbals. There was a great deal of this 'music,' and also recitations by the priest of portions of the Gospels. Furthermore, another man, whom he singled out from among those present, likewise read passages from the

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 Scriptures. After interminable readings and chantings there was a pause, and one of the mourners present clapped his hands, thus commanding the attention of every one in the church. He then began the funeral oration, extolling the dead man and mentioning many of his good deeds. He spoke with great fervour and sincerity, though he was himself a Muslim, and I much admired his restrained gestures, his fluency, and his clear enunciation. He was really a good speaker and entirely devoid of self-consciousness. After the speech was ended the candles were put out and removed from the sides of the coffin, the lid was replaced, the bearers hoisted the coffin on to their shoulders, and, preceded by the priest and the *'arif*, walked three times round the church, followed by all the mourners. After the third perambulation they came down the centre of the building, and so out of the church to the place of burial.

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 There is no service at the grave among the Copts, and after loud-voiced and conflicting advice from every man in the crowd assembled round the grave the coffin was at last successfully lowered to its final resting-place, a vault in which a number of interments had already been made. Finally the opening to the vault was bricked up and the earth flung back into its place again, and we all set off for our several abodes.

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 The mourning at the house usually lasts for seven days, as with the Muslims, though the period is sometimes reduced to three days only. During those seven or three days, according to one of my Coptic informants, no food is cooked in the house of mourning, but supplies are brought in by village friends. According to the same informant, prayers are offered up in the church by the priest on the third, seventh, fifteenth, and fortieth days after a death; these prayers are believed to be the means of saving a lost soul. During the fifteen days the house of mourning is not swept, but no reason was given for this custom.

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 On the third day after a death has taken place a priest, attended by the *'arif*, goes to the house of the dead man or woman. Some of the uneducated Copts believe that the priest on this occasion dismisses the soul of the dead person from the house, where it is believed to remain until that day. I was present for this ceremony after the death of the Copt whose funeral I described above. As his relations were very poor people the ceremony was doubtless far less elaborate than it would be in the case of people in a better position.

THE FELLAḤIN OF UPPER EGYPT

243 'bride of the corn' (*'arūset el-kamḥ*), is used as a charm. One
 789 may be suspended over the house-door as an antidote to the evil
 778 eye; another may be hung up in the room containing the stores of
 food, as a charm to ensure abundance. Many tradesmen hang such
 objects in their shop-windows, believing that this will bring them

plenty of customers. Again, in some parts of Egypt the 'bride of the corn' is temporarily placed on the heaps of grain after the winnowing is completed, as a charm to secure a good harvest the following year. Sometimes the grain from these heads of corn is extracted and mixed with the next year's sowing. The 'bride' may be left hanging till it is replaced at the next harvest, or, again, it may be allowed to remain in its place until it falls to pieces (Fig. 99).

Before the field is cut a certain number of people are given presents of

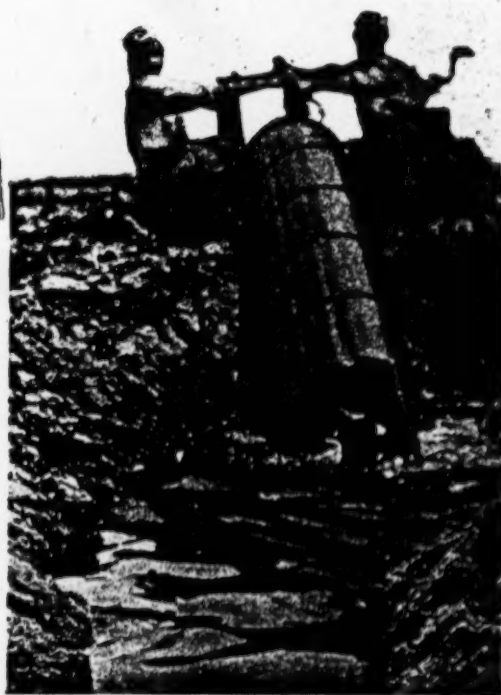


FIG. 98. THE ARCHIMEDEAN SCREW

corn by the owner. These gifts of the firstfruits are bestowed on some of the poorest people in the village, as well as on the barber, the *mueddin* (the man who chants the call to prayer from the mosque), the *summāreh*-player, the carpenter, and the *fukahā*—the last-mentioned being poor men who recite the *Qurān* in mosques, in private houses, at funeral ceremonies, and at the periodical visits to the grave (see pp. 112, 114 f., 117 ff., and Fig. 100).

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927

MR13 Fellahin MR13●

Upper Egypt
COPTS MR 10

MAGICIANS AND MAGIC

The following is another method of finding hidden treasure. In this case a priest acted as magician, and the exact spot where the treasure lay hidden was known. E
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On the outskirts of a certain village in Upper Egypt there is a very large stone. It lies on the ground and is covered with water for a great part of the year—probably water left from the inundation. Under this stone treasure of great value is believed to be buried. The stone is said to extend some distance underground, its base being some yards below the surface. A cock is supposed to be the guardian of this treasure, and it sometimes appears to certain of the villagers, crows two or three times, and then disappears. E
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A Coptic priest in the neighbourhood owns a book in which is entered a list of all the buried treasures in that province, where such hidden hoards are believed to be numerous. Among others in this book was noted the description and locality of the hidden treasure in question, and he determined to see if he could get it. Accordingly, at midnight he went to the stone, taking his book with him, for in it were written the proper incantations to be recited on such an occasion. He also took incense with him, which he burned in a dish, meanwhile reciting the incantations prescribed in his book. Suddenly the great stone broke in two, the two halves banging together and making a sound like the roar of a lion. This terrific noise disturbed all the inhabitants of the village near by, who came out to see what was the matter. The priest was so afraid of being discovered that he climbed up a tall palm-tree not far from the spot and remained there till dawn, when he ventured to climb down and return to his house.

I was told that, as soon as the priest ceased burning the incense and reciting the incantations, both acts having come to an abrupt conclusion when he fled in terror to the tree, the two halves of the stone joined together again, and not the slightest trace of a crack is now visible. E
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The people say that it would be useless for anyone to attempt to dig up the treasure, for the deeper you dig the lower the stone goes into the earth.

There is a large number of stories current all over the country about hidden treasure, and I have been told of the existence of more than one book containing a list of places where treasure is to be found.

It is the custom of many of the countryfolk to hide their money 000

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THE FELLAHIN OF UPPER EGYPT

of sheikhs, and the Muslim remarked that the Copts had no real saints, but that what they believed about their so-called saints was all rubbish. To this his host replied, "That is not so; we have a celebrated saint to whom the church close by is dedicated." But his guest scoffed at him.

At night, when the Muslim was sleeping in a room in the upper story of the house—his host sleeping on the ground floor—a young man appeared before him, and touched him to wake him from his slumbers. This uninvited guest then seized the Muslim by the throat and asked him how he dared to speak of the Coptic saints in the scornful way he had done.

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Meanwhile, the host, hearing his guest choking, and crying out, "Leave me, leave me! I am wrong, I am wrong!" rushed up, thinking that he was being attacked by thieves. When he arrived on the scene he found his guest weeping, so he asked him what was the matter. The Muslim then told him of his unexpected visitor, and described his appearance. From the description the host knew that the mysterious person was the great saint himself. So loud had been the cries of the terrified Muslim that the whole neighbourhood had heard him.

On the following morning the now repentant Muslim repaired to the church dedicated to Māri Egladiūs el-'Azab, and, with shoes hanging round his neck, knelt before the altar and prayed to the saint, saying, "Pardon me, pardon me, pardon me!" After this he left the church.

Since this visitation of the saint the Muslim, who still remains a follower of Islām, sends every year a gift of wax for the manufacture of candles used in the services held in the church, together with a present of incense.

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It must be explained here that it is the custom all over Egypt, when a Copt or a Muslim has committed a wrong against a saint or sheikh, for him to repair to the church or mosque and borrow a pair of shoes such as are worn by the poor *fellahin*. These shoes are suspended by a cord round the neck of the penitent, who must wear them in this way as he kneels before the altar, or *kibleh*,¹ as the case may be. As he kneels he must repeat the words "Pardon me," seven, five, or three times, the number of repetitions being decided by the priest or *imām* present in the church or mosque. When this act of repentance is finished the man goes out and returns

¹ The prayer-niche turned toward Mecca.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927

MR13 Fellahin MR13 ●

Upper Egypt

COPTS MR10

COPTIC SAINTS

the shoes to the original owner. The shoes must always be those of a very poor *fellah* who is in wretched circumstances, thus indicating the attitude of mind of the penitent man in the presence of the saint or sheikh whom he has wronged. E 783

With regard to the offering of wax, it may be of interest to explain that the candles used in religious ceremonies in the Coptic church are always made by the priest himself or else by the servant who is responsible for the cleaning of the church. E 782 793 ●

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ANALOGIES

associated in ancient than they are in modern Egypt, as is evident from Dr A. H. Gardiner's illuminating article, "Professional Magicians in Ancient Egypt."¹ It is interesting to note also that the two titles *swnw*, 'physician,' and *stw*, 'amulet-man'—i.e., 'maker' or 'purveyor of amulets'—are borne more than once by the same person.²

The necessity for a magician's being clean (p. 186) is strongly emphasized in ancient Egyptian magical texts.³

The modern belief that a person can be possessed by an *'afrit* (pp. 231 f.) or a sheikh (pp. 187, 197 ff.) finds an ancient parallel in the tale of *The Daughter of the Prince of Bakhtan and the Possessing Spirit*.⁴ The peacemaking feast held by people who have appeased the possessing sheikh (pp. 186, 199 f.) is likewise paralleled in the same story, where we are told⁵ that the spirit, while agreeing to leave the princess, demanded that a feast-day be celebrated with him and with the chief of Bakhtan, a demand that was carried out.

The magical ceremony described on p. 188 began with the sweeping of the ground and the sprinkling of water.⁶ In ancient Egypt the priest, before beginning the toilet episodes of the temple liturgy, swept the floor of the sanctuary with a cloth.⁷ As the king (the high-priest *par excellence*) is shown in a relief in the temple of Derr⁸ holding a ewer as well as the cloth used for sweeping the floor, it is highly probable that the priest often sprinkled the floor as well as swept it. It was certainly the custom to sprinkle water while the floor of a house was being swept, as we learn from a wall-painting found by Professor Petrie at el-'Amarneh.⁹ With regard to the lighting of a fire and the burning of a hoopoo's feathers (p. 188), it should be pointed out that the ancient magicians also burned various strange substances while pronouncing their spells.¹⁰

¹ *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, vol. XXXIX (1917), pp. 31 ff.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

³ A. M. Blackman, "Purification (Egyptian)," in Hastings, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 482.

⁴ G. Maspero, *Popular Stories of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1915), pp. 172 ff.; J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, vol. iii, pp. 188 ff.

⁵ J. H. Breasted, *op. cit.*, § 444.

⁶ Cf. A. M. Blackman, "Purification (Egyptian)," in Hastings, *op. cit.*, vol. x, p. 482.

⁷ A. M. Blackman, "Worship (Egyptian)," in Hastings, *op. cit.*, vol. xii, p. 778.

⁸ A. M. Blackman, *The Temple of Derr* (Cairo, 1913), Pl. LXIV, left.

⁹ W. M. F. Petrie, *Tell el Amarna* (London, 1894), Pl. V.

¹⁰ F. Ll. Griffith and H. Thompson, *The Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden* (London, 1904), pp. 37 ff.

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"In sha Allah".

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"In sha Allah's no good. We're talking business, and

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I want a definite promise".

"No in sha Allah, no cotton, ya shawdga, Good day".

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'God will provide. God distributes His benefits. God protects the crops. God is with the patient. To everyone the fate which God has assigned him. We are from God, and to God we shall return. God is there. God will give in His own good time. Man proposes and God disposes. God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.' Such are the sentences of peasant theology. They encourage fatalism and deepen resignation, but they are often rich with all the splendour of filial obedience to the Divine Will.

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The fellah believes in God as the Prime Mover and First of all Living. In spite of the poverty of his intellect, and his ignorance in matters of religion, his conception of God is admirably pure. God is the Almighty, the Just, the Good. All attributes are united in the word the peasant uses for God, *Rabbina*, our Lord and Master. To hear a fellah utter this word is to be convinced of his faith.

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The superstitions which enmesh his soul have not corrupted the essence of his faith. The fellaheen are far more given to prayer and asceticism than other people, for they are by nature believers. They have always been powerfully attracted by sacredness (*baraka*), the supernatural, holiness, or even the appearance of these things.

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The Catholics among the fellaheen, whom the writer knows best, can be splendidly religious in their lives, even to the point of heroism. Those of their priests who are fellaheen live among them and for them with a devotion and self-denial of which missionaries from Europe would rarely be capable. It must not be forgotten that the first monks of the Christian world, the monks of the Thebaid, were fellaheen (").

535 the inevitable castanets (like the crotali of the ancients),
 527 and casts around coquettish glances. Whatever of art is
 [534] displayed consists in movements of the trunk and hips—impossible to imitate—the limbs being almost at rest. Occasionally the girl moves slowly round in a circle, gives a slight hop, perhaps swings a sword, and sinks gradually to the ground balancing a small cup on her forehead, or whirls herself round sitting on a narrow-mouthed pitcher. Yet the public are enthusiastic to the highest degree about those female performers, a popularity which no doubt they owe more to their affability than to their artistic skill, since they joke with everybody and everybody with them without any embarrassment. But dancing is given up entirely to them, and if any one were to catch them round the waist, *ala Franka*, and dance round in a galop with them, he would bring abuse and disgrace on himself, and would be set down as crazy. It is a modern and Frankish custom for members of both sexes to dance together in close contact, and such a practice was also unknown to classical antiquity. The Oriental loves dancing and music, but seldom cultivates them in person, getting people who practise these arts as their profession to perform for his entertainment; and their profession is never held in esteem, but is regarded as degrading, like that of an actor in the Frankish middle ages. For a grown-up man of the better class to sing by himself, or merely to join in with others, or even to amuse himself on a musical instrument, is regarded as undignified, and still more for ladies. At such *fantasies* the representatives of religion, the kadis and ulema, do not fail to be present, and laugh heartily even at obscenities. The priests of ancient Egypt, as also the severe Socrates, saw no harm in having music and dancing in their houses; they even practised music themselves. The higher ranks did not dance and sing themselves, but hired professional dancing-girls and musical performers as at the present day. Among the Greeks music and dancing were in high esteem, and formed a part of education—even the gods themselves danced.

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The performance of the *chauei* or male dancer is not much